

COMMENTARY

Chance, coincidence or a divine appointment?

By Kenneth D. MacHarg

LAM News Service

Inkawasi, Peru (LAMNS)--
Chance doesn't exist. Luck is a four-letter word. And, chance, luck and random coincidence are not biblical concepts.

For the Christian believer, God is in control of events and timing and the convergence of our willingness and His needs.

Take my recent reunion with Hendrik and Ronel Groenewald, South-African missionaries in this remote mountain region of Peru.



Polly and I were classmates with them thirteen years ago at the Spanish Language Institute in Costa Rica. Shortly after we graduated, Hendrik wrote to say that he had the possibility of getting into a radio ministry among the Quechua Indians of northern Peru but needed some advice concerning how to go about it.

In fact, his letter, along with contacts that same year from three other fellow classmates first gave me the idea of writing *Proclaiming the Gospel; Guidelines for local Christian Radio Programming Around the World*, a book just recently published in both English and Spanish about how to do quality Christian radio programming.

I was in Peru in early July to visit LAM missionaries in the region and to report on what the Lord is doing through their ministries. My first morning at the Wycliffe Bible Translator's guesthouse in Lima, I ran into Hendrik and Ronel, our first meeting since our language school days.

Within the first half-hour, he learned about the book and I learned that his long-dreamed-of station had gone on the air only one week earlier. We both marveled at the timing of those two events. "Could you extend your visit to Peru and come to Inkawasi to present a workshop on how to do Christian broadcasting before you go back to Miami?" Hendrik asked me.

A week later I flew to the northern coastal city of Chiclayo, and from there joined the Groenewald family for a grueling 60 mile, four hour drive up a winding, twisting, precipitous dirt road to reach the town. All of the way we dodged boulders in the road,

squeezed against the several thousand-foot drop-offs to let one or two trucks go by and arrived close to midnight at the 9,300 foot altitude where the town of 500 people spreads over a sloping side of the mountain.

The next morning I visited the station, a very simple, low-powered AM facility that serves the town and its surrounding population of nearly 20,000 people who speak their particular dialect of Quechua (the language of the Incas). Supplied with a simple control panel, two cassette players, one microphone and a perhaps two-dozen cassette tapes, local Christians are offering programs from 3 a.m. (the usual time for Quechua farmers to wake up) until around eight or nine in the evening.

A short walk from the station to the community school where the workshop was to be held left me breathless because of the high altitude, but ready to go. Quickly, twenty men filed into the classroom and took their places ready to learn how to use this tool that God has given them to reach their own people.

I planned on starting the workshop with an illustration. I was going to turn on my small radio and let them listen to their own station for a few minutes. I flicked the switch and heard...nothing. "What's wrong?" I asked. "The station is off the air."

"Of course," they told me. "Everyone from the station is here for the workshop!"

For the next seven and one-half hours we talked radio. We explored what they saw as the purpose of the station, discussed what kinds of programs they could present that would serve all of the needs of the community while presenting the Gospel, talked about production techniques, demonstrated how to use a microphone, searched for ways to publicize and finance the operation and considered how to follow up with the listeners.

They were full of questions. Could/should a Christian radio station use secular programs? Where could they find other programs in Quechua? How could they present programs that were well written and well produced? How could they modify the antenna to send a stronger signal farther into the mountains?

At the end of the day, I could sense their satisfaction and the knowledge that they had received. There were many things to think about, but God had fortified their call to Christian community radio and had blessed them in their ministry.

As we parted the next day, Ronel, Hendrik and I agreed that our meeting in Lima and the subsequent ministry through the workshop was not blind chance, dumb luck or casual coincidence. As Ronel said, "it was a God appointment."

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